

The Department of the Treasury
(Including Internal Revenue Service, U. S. Customs
Service, Financial Management Service
and Other Treasury)

1999 NPR Federal Employee Survey
Improvement Plan

April 3, 2000

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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
1999 EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

The Department of the Treasury's scope of responsibilities reaches wide and touches the lives of almost every American. The four-part mission illustrates the breadth and the diversity of the mission:

- Economic Mission:** To Promote Prosperous and Stable American and World Economies
- Financial Mission:** To Effectively Manage the Government's Finances
- Enforcement Mission:** To Protect our Financial Systems and our Nation's Leaders, and Foster a Safe and Drug-Free America
- Management Mission:** To Continue to Build a Strong Institution

Treasury is organized into two major components: the Departmental Offices and the operating bureaus. The Departmental Offices (DO) are primarily responsible for the formulation of policy and management of the Department as a whole, while the operating bureaus carry out the specific operations assigned to the Department. Our bureaus make up 98% of the Treasury work force. There are fourteen (14) bureaus within the Department. Each of the Bureaus has distinct missions and independent functions that range from printing of stamps to enforcement.

The NPR recognizes three Bureaus within the Treasury family as High Impact Agencies. These Bureaus are Internal Revenue Service (IRS), U. S. Customs Service (Customs) and Financial Management Service (FMS). These three Bureaus represent over 75% of the total Treasury workforce.

SURVEYING EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

The HIAs have been engaged in surveying employees for many years. The instruments used by the HIAs include *the Take Ten Employee Survey* and *IRS Survey* administered annually by IRS and the *Organizational Assessment Survey* administered at the U. S. Customs Service. IRS, Customs and FMS are analyzing the current survey results along with results from the 1998 NPR survey to determine trends, improvements, and new opportunities for improvement.

The data gleaned from the survey instruments is taken very seriously in IRS, Customs and FMS. Results are carefully analyzed and action is taken on the key indicators of dissatisfaction. It is important to recognize that the results from the 1999 NPR Employee Survey are viewed as **indicators** of levels of employee satisfaction and are, in many instances, validated against data from other internal organizational assessment surveys. It is also important to note that the sample size of the populations surveyed in the NPR instrument represent different percentages of the total population of the individual Bureau.

In addition to many other survey devices and approaches being used by the HIAs to measure employee satisfaction, results are also compared with customer satisfaction survey data and business results to achieve a balanced scorecard approach.

The results from the “other Treasury” category total approximately 260+ respondents from across 10 remaining Bureaus and the Departmental Offices and is perceived as too small to consider the information as a valid indicator. However, employee satisfaction is viewed as a critical element by Treasury senior management. Therefore, this Improvement Plan will eventually be exported to other parts of the Department.

Under the umbrella of “Other Treasury”, the U. S. Mint has just completed its sixth consecutive year of conducting the Organizational Assessment Survey. It is given to all Mint employees and the response rate has averaged 50%. It covers some 14 dimensions and is broken down by facility and strategic business units.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Areas Where the Agency is Doing Well

Treasury-wide findings were reported in four separate groups: IRS, Customs, FMS, and employees from the rest of the department. Overall, the perception among employees is that their organizations are doing well in “setting service goals to meet customer expectations”, “overall quality of work being done in the work group”, and “supervisor/team leaders understand and supporting employees’ family/personal life responsibilities.” (Wording from survey instrument.)

In comparing 1999 with 1998 results, IRS has been recognized by NPR as one of five agencies showing the greatest overall improvement in their 1999 survey results. IRS exceeded the government average in establishing goals aimed at meeting customer expectations. In addition, IRS employees responded favorably to managers communicating the organization’s mission/vision statements and management’s understanding and support of employee’s family/personal life responsibilities. IRS plans to continue monitoring employee satisfaction during the current reorganization activities.

FMS exceeded overall government averages in the use of teams to accomplish organizational goals and management working cooperatively with the union(s) on mutual problems.

Customs employees responded favorably to service goals aimed at meeting customer expectations, electronic access to information, and the use of teams to accomplish organizational goals. Customs is embarking on a range of training and communications initiatives which address issues affecting quality of work, performance expectations, and opportunities for employees to share their views.

Areas Targeted for Improvement

The NPR survey data has been carefully analyzed by a team comprised of representatives from the three Treasury HIA's, the Office of Strategic Planning, the Office of Personnel Policy, the Office of Business Innovations (formerly the Office of Treasury Reinvention) and NTEU. The experiences of the HIAs will serve as a foundation for the Bureaus and Departmental Offices who may be starting on the journey to improve employee satisfaction. The team's approach to a Department-wide strategy will maximize resources, reduce duplicative efforts and generate creative and innovative solutions to the identified challenges.

This plan closely links to the ongoing efforts of the High Impact Agencies. However, it is apparent that the findings and areas of concern could be of interest to the other Bureaus and the Departmental Offices. Recommendations for improvement, strategies, and results will be shared with the Other Treasury Bureaus and Departmental Offices (DO). Best practices and innovative ideas for improving employee satisfaction will be communicated throughout all of Treasury.

This Plan addresses specific elements targeted for improvement that have been identified as crosscutting for IRS, Customs, Departmental Offices (DO) and all other Bureaus.

Financial Management Service (FMS) participated in the collaborative discussions and has agreed that some of their key areas of concern are similar to those faced by other Treasury Bureaus and DO. However, FMS is continuing to focus on improvements targeted from the 1998 NPR Survey Results so that improvements will be fully realized. Their longer term plans include validating the 1999 results and implementing additional improvement strategies in the future. One key issue targeted by FMS for validation is customer satisfaction.

There are four crosscutting issues for which potential actions have been proposed. These areas for improvement include training, communication, management effectiveness and organizational effectiveness.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

The Department of the Treasury's Strategic Plan, within the Management Mission to continue to build a strong institution, has, as a key goal, the improvement of employee satisfaction. The objectives within this goal are to regularly measure employee perceptions of management and organizational effectiveness and make improvements in key problem areas identified by employees.

The foundation for focusing on employee satisfaction has been established. The participation by the High Impact Agencies in the NPR 1999 Employee Satisfaction Survey, as well as the use of other mechanisms for gathering information about employee satisfaction issues demonstrate that Treasury is committed to improving employee satisfaction. The improvement strategies for the HIAs build on the process that they have already begun. The key problem areas are clearly identified and have been indicated above.

We believe that applying findings universally is problematic due to the sample size and the unique individual missions of each bureau. The variances in responding to different instruments and scope of the different missions – from law enforcement to tax collection – create opportunities for individual approaches within the organizations. With this Plan as a framework, we plan to help the Treasury entities move at a pace that meets their own needs.

Immediate Action Steps in Targeted Areas

As noted earlier, the areas of communication, training, management effectiveness and organizational effectiveness have been targeted as crosscutting targets for improvement. Specific short-term action strategies for these areas follow. In addition, short-term strategies for the rest of Treasury take into account the various stages that individual Bureaus and Departmental Offices may be in, as well as consideration of the mission of each organizational entity.

Bureaus may select any or all of the proposed actions listed in the four prioritized areas. Actions will be tailored and based on the bureau's need to make organizational improvements. A key component of the improvement strategy is communications with employees about the survey, the results, and the plans for addressing areas for improvement.

Recommended Priority Actions for Training

- Identify critical areas where training is needed and conduct a gap analysis. Analyze results to determine skill deficiencies or other areas where training can be utilized to

- enhance or improve operations.
- Incorporate best practices and utilize technology to share information and provide training to a wide range of audiences.

Recommended Priority Actions for Communications

- Communicate survey results to employees in plain language.
 - Use electronic and other mechanisms to share survey results with individual organizations.
 - Seek specific opportunities (town hall meetings, staff meetings, training) to get the message across.
 - Ensure messages are communicated across and down organizational lines
 - Involve employees at all levels for understanding of the issue and suggestions for improvement.
- Encourage senior managers to maintain a presence, formal and informal, throughout the organization, interacting with employees across functional lines.
 - Develop materials to help managers communicate with employees
 - Facilitate the process in organizations where communication may be difficult (i.e. a remote workforce).
- Convey senior management's involvement by communicating their commitment to improve communications between employees and management.
 - Develop strategies to help managers demonstrate their commitment to improving employee satisfaction.
 - Encourage senior management to be more visible in their commitment to improving employee satisfaction
 - Form focus groups for management to help each other in difficult situations.

Recommended Priority Actions for Management Effectiveness

- Encourage management to communicate mission, goals and objectives and to link tasks and assignments to mission.
- Conduct manager focus groups in organizational units to get input on where a manager's time, skills, and resources can be used most effectively. Compare and share results across the organization.
- Identify methods to instill accountability, ensure integrity, and promote empowerment.
- Review the process for hiring, retaining, and promoting employees at all levels.

Recommended Priority Actions for Organizational Effectiveness

- Instruct managers (all levels) on how to effectively communicate survey information to employees.
- Ensure employees understand organization's mission, goals and strategies.

- Create an environment for managers and employees to openly discuss the mission and future direction of the organization and how their jobs affect the organization's overall goals.
- Provide opportunities for employees, at all levels, to freely express their views and/or issues of concern and know these issues will be communicated upward and addressed at the appropriate levels.

Recommended Priority Actions for Other Treasury**

- Determine existence of employee satisfaction data. If data does not exist, develop plan for surveying employees.
- Target two areas for improvement and develop action plans.
- Identify employee satisfaction champions throughout Treasury.
- Share resources to increase employee satisfaction.

**The data for all other Treasury may not be of sufficient size to determine if Training, Communication, Management Effectiveness, and Organizational Effectiveness are the greatest areas of concern. In addition, data may be available and should be used to address employee satisfaction.

LONG TERM IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

The long-term strategy will also incorporate use of other instruments to validate findings, developing partnerships within Treasury, other federal agencies, and the private sector to benchmark best practices in addressing the key targets of improvement. The Office of Business Innovations will continue to work with the HIA's, other bureaus and Departmental Offices in focusing on the predictors of job satisfaction, customer orientation, and reinvention. Emphasis will be placed on conducting surveys on a regular basis to validate survey findings against other data and predictors.

The budget process and fiscal implications of continuous employee surveys and acting on the issues are being considered as part of the improvement strategy. Efforts will also focus on identifying necessary resources to adequately address employee concerns. The Department's Human Resources Advisory Counsel (HRAC), will serve as a catalyst for identifying and sharing best practices in human resources and will work to maintain cooperation and communication among the bureaus and the Department.

POINTS OF CONTACT

Treasury Results and Action Plans will be available after March 31, 2000 at the following Web Addresses: **(these addresses need to be determined.)**

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